Chapter 7

Smith Wigglesworth

"Apostle of Faith" (excerpt)



My friend said, "She's dead." He was scared. I've never seen a man so scared in my life. "What do you want me to do?" he asked. Maybe you think what I did was absurd, but I stepped up to her bed and pulled her out. I dragged her across the room, leaned her against the wall and held her upright as she was undoubtedly dead. I looked her in the face and said, "In the name of Jesus, I command death to depart." From head to toe, her entire body began to vibrate. "In Jesus' name, I command you to go," I said. I repeated: "In the name of Jesus, in the name of Jesus, go!" and she went." Raising the dead was just one overwhelming aspect of Smith Wiggelsworth's ministry. This great apostle of faith had such an amazing anointing of God upon him that the miracles wrought through his ministry were only secondary. The former plumber gave a whole new meaning to the word "adventure" through his life. What did it take to live such an adventurous life? "Just believe!" For Smith Wigglesworth, obeying what he believed was nothing out of the ordinary - for him, it was simply the fruit of faith. It is said that he was unwavering and sometimes even relentless in his faith. It is also reported that he had an extraordinary teaching anointing and compassionate mercy - the fruit of these two components was that numerous salvations and miracles occurred daily through his ministry.

The little turnip puller

Smith was born on 8 June 1859 in the small town of Menston (Yorkshire) in England, the son of John and Martha Wigglesworth. When he was born, 1859 was already a historic year. The third great revival had been in full swing in America for two years. William Booth had distanced himself from the organised church and founded the Salvation Army; the church in Wales was praying for revival. In that spring of 1859, neither John nor Martha Wigglesworth would have imagined that Smith would one day be counted among the great Christian leaders of the day, including General Booth. And yet it was to be so. Their son was to rekindle the fire of God in the church, which had only smouldered there for hundreds of years. Smith's family was poor. His father worked hard to provide for his wife, daughter and three sons. So young Smith started working in the fields harvesting turnips at the age of six. It was hard work. He pulled turnips out of the ground from morning till night and his little hands were sore and swollen. But Smith developed the same solid attitude to work as his father, who was used to working long and hard for his wages. When Smith was seven years old, he worked in the local woollen mill like his father. From then on, the Wigglesworth family had an easier life. Their income had increased and they had enough to eat. Smith's father was a great bird lover. For a while he kept sixteen

songbirds in the house. This love of nature also rubbed off on the boy and he often looked for nests. Sometimes he would catch a few songbirds and sell them at the market in town to help support his family.

What is the difference between us?

Although his parents were not Christians, the young Smith always had a longing for God. Since he didn't learn to pray at home, he tried to do it on his own. He often asked God to show him where he could find birds' nests. Most of the time, he knew immediately where to look. His grandmother was a "die-hard" follower of Wesley who believed in the power of God. She made sure that Smith accompanied her to church services. As a young boy, he would just sit and watch the adults clapping their hands, dancing before the Lord and singing about "the blood". As an eight-year-old, Smith eventually sang along himself. As he joined in their singing, he received a "clear realisation of what it meant to be born again". He suddenly understood what Jesus Christ had done for him through his death and resurrection. Wigglesworth later reported on this day: "I realised this: because God longs for us so much, he has made it as easy as it can be for us - just believe!" He never doubted his salvation. The young Wigglesworth immediately became someone who led others to the Lord. The first person he led to Christ was his own mother. When his father discovered that his family had had a "religious experience", he brought them into the Anglican Church from then on. Smith's father himself was not born again, but he liked the vicar and enjoyed going to the pub to have a beer with him. After a short time, Smith agreed to sing in the church choir, but had to forgo training because he had to work so hard at a young age. When he was confirmed, he was ten years old. When the bishop waved his hand back and forth over him, Smith felt the closeness of God very intensely and this feeling did not leave him for several days. The other confirmands had experienced nothing like this and Smith later wrote: "After the confirmation service, the other boys immediately started swearing and arguing again and I wondered what had changed in me as opposed to them."

Something about you is different

When Smith was thirteen years old, he moved with his family from Menston to Bradford, where he became heavily involved in a Methodist congregation. His spiritual life took on a new meaning and he longed for the Spirit of God. Although he could not read well, he never left the house without pocketing the New Testament. At a later date, the Methodists introduced a special preaching service and seven boys - including Smith - were chosen to take part. The teenagers spent the three-week preparation period "in prayer". When the day arrived, Smith took the stage to preach for fifteen minutes. Afterwards, he could no longer remember what he had said. All he could remember was that he had been filled with an indescribable fervour and that his audience had shouted enthusiastically to cheer him on. Smith shared the gospel with everyone he met, and he could not understand why so many seemed to have little interest in it. In 1875, the Salvation Army established a ministry in Bradford. When Smith heard about it, he was thrilled. At last he had discovered a group that shared his concern for the lost. He joined the Salvation Army right from the start and soon learnt the power that could be released through prayer and fasting. At that time, the Salvation Army achieved greater success in evangelisation than any other denomination. They often prayed through the night and lay on the floor before the Lord. The Salvation Army initially had a resounding spiritual authority that was evident in every one of their services. During their weekly meetings, the group came together and prayed for the salvation of at least 50 to 100 people, and they knew they would meet or exceed that goal. Through this community of faith in Bradford, a significant number of people accepted Jesus as Saviour. At seventeen, Smith met a godly man at the spinning mill who taught him the plumbing trade. As they worked together, this man explained to him the meaning and importance of water baptism. In his eagerness to follow the Bible's instructions, Smith gladly accepted this advice and was baptised a short

time later. This was also the time when he heard the message that Christ would come a second time, and he was convinced that this event would take place around the turn of the century.

He was determined to "turn the fortunes" of every person he came into contact with. Trusting that the Lord would help him, Smith began to preach. In 1877, he went to see a plumber to ask him about a job. The plumber let him know that he was not hiring. Smith thanked him for the information, apologised for taking up the plumber's time and turned to leave. Suddenly the man stopped him and said, "There's something different about you. I just can't let you go." He hired Smith. Smith's performance was so excellent that the plumber could no longer employ him - he was working too fast! So Smith decided to move to Liverpool to utilise his experience as a plumber. In the strong power of God that was continually upon him, he began to minister to the children of the city. He had a deep desire to help them and so he preached the gospel to them. Hundreds came to the warehouse where Smith was ministering. Among them were rag-clad and hungry children, and Smith ministered to each one. Smith earned good money, but never spent it on himself, instead using it to buy these children food and clothing. In addition to his "children's ministry", Smith and a friend visited the hospitals and ships and shared Jesus Christ there. He prayed and fasted all day on Sundays and at least 50 people were saved every time he ministered. The Salvation Army regularly invited Smith to preach at their services, and as he preached the Word, he would sometimes burst into tears and weep in front of the gathered crowd. Although he wished he was as eloquent as Charles Spurgeon and other outstanding preachers, people were drawn to the altar by the hundreds, filled with a longing for God, because of his sincere compassion.

What funny people are these?

One of the most valuable additions to Smith's life was his wife, Mary Jane "Polly" Featherstone. If you research the marriages of some of God's great servants, you may get the impression that in order to avoid potential conflict, one of the partners has to play a subordinate role if the other is very strong. This was not the case with the Wigglesworths. Polly was in no way inferior to her husband, at certain times she was even stronger than him. She never refused to work in the background and Wigglesworth appreciated this attitude. He said of his wife: "What I am today I owe, after God, to my precious wife. Oh, she was enchanting!"



Die Familie Wigglesworth. Oben: Alice, Seth und Harold. Unten: Ernest, Smith, Mary Jane (Polly) und George.

Polly Featherstone came from a righteous Methodist family. Although her father taught in the temperance movement, he inherited a large sum of money raised through the sale of alcohol. In order

not to be unfaithful to his convictions, he refused to touch a single cent of the "shameful" inheritance. Polly watched her father's lifestyle closely and his strong character and beliefs about holiness lived on in her. She was a woman who spoke her mind. Polly later left her affluent surroundings and set off for Bradford to 'go in search of fame and fortune'. Once there, she took a job as a housemaid for a large family. One day, while she was in the city, she suddenly heard the sound of trumpets and loud shouting. When she discovered the source of the noise, she couldn't believe her eyes - what she had discovered was an open-air church service! The Salvation Army was a new community at the time and Polly wondered what kind of strange people they were. Curious, she followed the group to a large, dilapidated building. As the Salvation Army members marched inside, Polly stopped at the corner, hoping not to be spotted. But eventually her curiosity got the better of her and she scurried inside and found a seat in the gallery.

"Hallelujah! It is finished!"

Gypsy Tillie Smith, sister of the famous evangelist Gypsy Rodney Smith, preached a fiery message to her listeners about redemption through the blood of Jesus. Polly was deeply moved. When she became aware of her spiritual condition and realised that she was lost, she left the gallery and went to the front of the altar where she knelt. She refused any prayer from any of the staff until finally Tillie Smith came to pray for her. As the light of the Lord fell like warming rays into her heart, Polly jumped up, threw her gloves in the air and shouted, "Hallelujah! It is finished!" Not far from her sat a man who was watching her closely. This onlooker was her future husband - Smith Wigglesworth. "It seemed like the spirit of God was on her from the beginning," Smith said. The next evening, when Polly told the congregation what she had experienced, Smith had the impression that she "belonged to him". She was allowed to skip the usual preparation period and was eventually appointed an officer in the Salvation Army by General Booth himself. Polly worked for the Salvation Army in Scotland for some time and then returned to Bradford. However, because of a conflict that arose over her relationship with Wigglesworth, she eventually resigned from the Salvation Army. She had been an "officer" while he was just a "soldier". Although Smith was never an official member of the Salvation Army, there were strict rules regarding closer relationships between members of different ranks. After leaving, Polly joined the Order of the Garter (a temperance organisation), but she remained on friendly terms with The Salvation Army. At that time she was urged by various servants of God who belonged to the Methodist movement to hold evangelistic meetings in her church and hundreds of people were saved through her ministry; there was a strong anointing upon her.

"Smith, you are not my master!"

Polly became "Mrs Wigglesworth" in 1882, when she was twenty-two. Smith, who was a year older, encouraged her to continue her evangelistic ministry while he would continue to work as a plumber. However, he also had a "burden" for a neighbourhood in Bradford where there was not yet a church. The couple therefore rented a small building in which they organised various events as part of their so-called "Bradford Street Mission". In the thirty years they were married, the Wigglesworths had a daughter, Alice, and four sons, Seth, Harold, Ernest and George (who died in 1915). Before the birth of their children, the Wigglesworths prayed each time that it would serve God. When his wife preached, Smith took care of the babies during the service. He listened intently to the message and stayed near the altar, praying that people would find Christ. Smith, who was not the least bit unsettled by the fact that his wife was preaching, said, "Her job was to cast the net; my job was to reel in the fish. One is just as important as the other." He had recognised the power that a servant attitude releases. The year 1884 brought a harsh winter for Bradford and it was thanks to him that the plumbers' business flourished. Smith was not only fully utilised this winter, but was kept busy for another two years repairing the damage caused by the frost. During these years of working hard and earning a lot of money, Smith attended services less and less and his love for the Lord cooled noticeably. While his fire

grew dimmer and dimmer, Polly's light shone brighter and brighter and her zeal for God and in prayer never waned. Her constancy and diligence in the things of God made Smith's carelessness even more apparent and after a while her mere presence irritated him. One evening she came home from church a little later than usual. As she entered the flat, Smith stood in her way with the words, "I am the master of this house and I will not have you coming home so late at night!" Completely calmly, Polly replied: "I know you are my husband, but Christ is my Lord." Completely exasperated, Smith yanked open the back door and forced her out of the house. He even locked the door behind her. But in his anger, he had forgotten to lock the front door. So Polly simply went round the house and - laughing! - through the front door. She laughed so heartily that Smith finally gave up because he had to laugh himself. At that moment, he had a revelation in his heart and mind and decided to pray and fast for ten days to seek the Lord's closeness. In sincere, desperate repentance, he now found the path that led to his restoration.

"What level on the Richter scale do you reach?"

"The wife is the temperature regulator of the family", as the saying goes. If the housewife is in a bad mood, the whole family will soon be in a bad mood. If, on the other hand, the wife is bubbling over with joy, not to mention how bad the others are feeling, the world soon looks friendlier again. Polly Wigglesworth was a wonderfully "stable" person. I am convinced that her faithfulness and joy were severely tested when her husband fell away from the Lord. She was a much sought-after speaker, organising evangelistic outreaches all over the city, through which hundreds came to Christ while her husband worked or sat at home. There were certainly whispers about Smith's spiritual condition as the public scrutinised Polly's ministry, but she "never lost her composure". The secret of her triumph was obviously her security in Jesus Christ. When a husband has fallen away from the faith, it is common for his wife to nag and complain because she thinks she can get him to re-engage and repent. But only the Holy Spirit can cause a person to turn back to the Lord from the heart. Through the fire of God burning in her heart, Polly was always filled with joy. As a result, Smith realised his mistake and turned back to Jesus. His wife's behaviour was the immediate catalyst for his repentance and ultimately for their resounding global ministry together. The highest goal a "helpmate" can achieve is to help their spouse fulfil their calling (whatever it may be). God knows your spouse's heart and what it takes to get them where they need to be. Keep only your own heart pure and leave others to the Lord and the Holy Spirit. If you heed this advice, you won't go wrong. The first healing Towards the end of the 19th century, Smith travelled to Leeds to buy materials he needed for his work as a plumber. Whilst there, he attended a church service where divine healing was proclaimed. From his seat, Smith watched in amazement as people were healed through divine miracles. He was deeply impressed and began to look out for the sick in Bradford. He even paid their travelling expenses so that they could attend the healing services in Leeds. However, he didn't dare tell his wife about it. He feared she would behave like the other scofflaws of the time, who contemptuously labelled divine healing as "fanaticism". But when she eventually found out what Smith was doing, she listened carefully to his accounts of the event and, needing healing herself, she accompanied him to Leeds. There she was offered the prayer of faith and was healed immediately. From that day on, the Wigglesworths were passionate advocates of the truth that God heals.

Their congregation in Bradford continued to grow. Eventually they looked for a larger meeting place and found a building in Bowland Street. They appropriately named their new ministry "Bowland Street Mission". On the wall behind the pulpit, they had painted a huge scroll that read: "I am the Lord who heals you." At the beginning of the 20th century, Smith experienced the healing power of God on his own body for the first time. He had suffered from haemorrhoids since childhood and a visiting servant of God prayed and agreed with Smith in faith that this disease would be removed by the healing power of God. Up to that point, Smith had been using "salts" daily, but being convinced of God's will, he finally

gave them up. And he realised that he was completely healed. He never struggled with this problem again for the rest of his life. In the meantime, Smith had dedicated himself completely to the healing ministry. Being self-employed, he was able to take the time to bring several people as a group to the healing services in Leeds and could even pay for the travelling expenses. Wigglesworth was known for having great compassion for the sick and needy. The staff in Leeds smiled every time they saw Smith arrive with a new 'travelling party', as he didn't seem to understand that God could heal the sick in Bradford as well. "Shoved" behind the pulpit! The leaders of the healing houses in Leeds, realising that Smith needed a little 'nudge' to get his public ministry going, made a decision. As they intended to attend the conference in Keswick, they asked Smith to represent them behind the lectern in their absence. At first Smith was hesitant, but the other servants of God encouraged him and assured him that he could do it. He comforted himself with the thought that he would only be taking the lead and that there would surely be plenty of people who would like to preach. But when the time came, not a single person wanted to preach. Everyone agreed that Smith should preach. So, hesitantly, he began to minister, and when he finished his message, fifteen people came forward to receive healing. One man dragged himself forward on two crutches and as Smith prayed for him, he was suddenly bouncing back and forth - crutch-less and perfectly healthy. Of all those present, Smith was probably the most surprised. After this meeting, many doors opened for Smith's ministry and soon he announced that he was going to hold a healing seminar in Bradford. On the first night, twelve people came forward to receive healing and every single one of them was healed. One lady had a large tumour that was constantly oozing. After the prayer of faith was said for her, she went home. The next day she reported that only a scar was visible where the tumour had been.

Please ... Be quiet!

It wasn't long before Smith faced his first challenge. It was a life-or-death case. A close friend's wife was so ill that the doctors expected her to die that very night. Smith's friend desperately explained that he didn't know how to use his faith for his wife. Smith was moved with compassion and decided to help this family. He sought out a servant of God who had planted a small church in Bradford and asked him to visit this woman and pray for her. But the servant of God refused. Smith then tried his luck with a friend who was known for his well-formulated prayers. The friend agreed and the two of them set off. The fact that he had someone to help him encouraged Smith immensely. He advised his companion to start praying as soon as they entered the house. When he saw how weak the woman was, he immediately put Smith's advice into practice. He began to pray - but his prayer did not meet Smith's expectations in the slightest. This man prayed for the "family left behind" and then continued to mumble in a negative tone until Smith silenced him loudly. Thinking he had prevented the worst, he now asked the dying woman's husband to pray. But his prayer was just as pathetic. Finally, Smith could bear it no longer and shouted so loudly that he could be heard all the way down the street - "Lord, shut him up!" The man fell silent instantly. Now Smith took a small bottle of oil from his pocket and poured the entire contents over the woman's body, in the name of Jesus. As he stood at the head of her bed, Smith had his first vision. He said: "Suddenly the Lord Jesus appeared to me. I stared at him with wide eyes. He smiled at me in that special, gentle way that only He can... I have never forgotten that vision, the vision of that beautiful, gentle smile." A few moments after the vision had passed, the woman sat up in her bed, filled with renewed vigour. She raised several more children and even outlived her husband.

"Devil, come out!"

The more Smith hungered for God's Word, the less he allowed any literature, secular or Christian, other than the Bible in his home. He believed that everything he needed to know could be found in God's Word. Smith said of his wife, "She saw how illiterate I was, and she immediately began to teach me to read and write; unfortunately, she failed to teach me how to spell properly." "... the only thing he

needed to know was God's word ..." The next life-threatening situation concerned Smith's own life. One day, he was suddenly overcome with unbearable pain, leaving him unable to leave his bed. Having agreed with his wife earlier that they would not take any medication, he put his healing completely in God's hands. The family prayed all night for relief from the pain, but nothing happened. Smith grew weaker by the hour and finally said to his wife, "I believe the Lord is taking me home. For your own protection, you'd better call a doctor now." Deeply distressed, Polly called for a doctor as she thought her husband was dying. When the doctor had examined the patient, he shook his head regretfully and explained to the family that this was a case of appendicitis, which had worsened considerably over the past six months. Smith's organs, he continued, were so damaged that there was no hope, even if surgery was considered. After the doctor left, an elderly woman and a young man entered Smith's room. This woman was convinced of the prayer of faith and believed that all sickness was caused by the devil. While she was praying, the young man sat on the edge of the bed, put both hands on Smith and shouted, "Devil, in Jesus' name, come out!" To Smith's surprise, the devil "came out" and he was immediately pain-free. To be on the safe side, the couple prayed again for Smith. After this prayer, he got up, got dressed and went downstairs. He said to his wife, "I'm healed. Have any orders come in?" When he told Polly what had happened, she was speechless with astonishment and wordlessly handed him the order slips. He immediately set off to go about his work and from that day on he never had any more trouble with his appendix.

"You're catching demons!"

Smith Wigglesworth's life took another turn in 1907. He had heard that some people in Sunderland had been "baptised in the Holy Spirit" and were speaking "in new tongues". He decided to see the whole thing for himself. Up until that point, Smith had believed that he had already been baptised in the Holy Spirit. He and his wife agreed with the current doctrine of the time, which held that sanctification and the baptism in the Holy Spirit were identical. Smith recalled an incident from the past that had moved him to repentance and inspired a ten-day fast. While fasting, Smith had found his way back to God, and as a result his life had been fundamentally changed. It is said that he gave himself completely to the Lord in order to be fully sanctified as he prayed and wept before the Lord. By the time he finished his fast, he was so free from his outbursts of anger and moodiness that it was common for someone to wish they were in the same spiritual condition as Smith. For this reason, Smith had come to the conclusion that he had been baptised in the Holy Spirit, that he had been sanctified. After writing a letter to his friends in Sunderland referring to praying in new languages, he was warned to stay away because "these people are catching demons". However, when Smith travelled there anyway and prayed with his friends about the matter, they just looked at him and said, "Follow your own impression!" Attending the events in Sunderland led by Vicar Alexander Boddy proved to be very disappointing for Smith. There seemed to be a mighty move of God going on in Bradford, but here it was very dry spiritually and there was no demonstration of the power of God. Being totally frustrated, Smith kept interrupting the meetings by interjecting, "I came here from Bradford and I want to have the same experience as the believers at Pentecost and speak in new tongues myself. But I don't understand why our services, unlike yours, are ignited by the fire of God." In his desperate search, Smith disturbed the congregation so often that he was reprimanded outside after the service.

Immersed in power and glory

Whilst Smith wholeheartedly sought the nearness of God to experience "this baptism in the Holy Spirit", he went to a Salvation Army building in the same town to pray. Three times he was thrown to the ground by the power of God. The members of the Salvation Army warned him against speaking in new languages, but Smith would not be dissuaded from experiencing God in this area. For four days he waited on the Lord, expecting to speak in new languages, but nothing happened. Finally, when he was completely discouraged in his spirit, he decided to return to Bradford. Before leaving, he went

back to the vicarage to say goodbye to Mrs Boddy, the vicar's wife. He told her that he had to return home and that he had not been able to speak in any new languages. She replied: "What you need is not prayer in languages, but baptism." Smith asked her to lay hands on him before he set off. She said a simple but powerful prayer and then left the room. At that moment, the fire fell. Immersed in the power and glory of the Lord, Smith had a vision. He saw the empty cross and Jesus, who had been lifted up and was at the right hand of the Father. Filled with praise and worship, Smith opened his mouth and began to speak in new tongues. He finally realised that although he had received an anointing before, he had not been baptised with the Holy Spirit like the believers at Pentecost. Instead of going home, Smith marched straight to the church where Pastor Boddy was holding a service. He interrupted him with a request to speak for a few seconds. After he had finished his "sermon", 50 people were miraculously baptised in the Holy Spirit and they all prayed in new languages. The local paper, the Sunderland Daily Echo, honoured this event with a headline, reporting in detail on Smith's experience and also that he was speaking in new languages and had been healed. Smith telegraphed home to report this great news.

Holy laughter

On his journey home to Bradford, Smith had a premonition that his new-found joy would be put to the test, and he was right. He had barely closed the door behind him when Polly emphatically declared, "I want to make one thing clear: I am just as baptised in the Holy Spirit as you are and I don't speak in new tongues ... On Sunday you preach and I'll see what's behind it all!" She kept her word and the following Sunday Polly sat in the back row of the congregation. As Smith stepped behind the pulpit, the Lord gave him the verses Isaiah 61:1-3, and he preached with great authority and assurance as Polly rocked back and forth in her chair, saying to herself, "That's not my Smith, Lord. That's not my Smith!" After the service, a staff member stood up and said he wished he had the same experience Smith had. When he went to sit down again, he missed his chair and fell on the floor! Smith's eldest son also stood up with the same request and he too went down next to his chair! Within a very short time, eleven people were on the floor laughing in the Spirit. The whole congregation broke out in holy laughter as God poured out His Spirit on them. A great outpouring began that day in Bradford, with hundreds being baptised with the Holy Spirit and speaking in new tongues. Shortly after Polly was filled with the Holy Spirit, the couple travelled all over the country to meet requests for their ministry. Wherever they went, people seemed to be convicted of their sins. One day, when Smith entered a grocery shop to buy groceries, three people fell to their knees and begged for forgiveness. On another occasion, Smith walked past two women working in a field and called out to them, "Are you saved?" He had barely finished his question when the two women dropped their baskets and cried out to God.

God's financial covenant

Shortly afterwards, Smith developed the habit of praying and fasting. It wasn't long before Smith's letterbox was overflowing with letters from all over the country asking him to come and pray for the sick. He complied with every request as far as he could and sometimes, after arriving by train in a particular town, he would organise a bicycle to travel another fifteen kilometres to the sick person. His job as a plumber soon suffered from the great demand for his services. He was travelling so frequently that his customers, one after the other, had to hire another plumber. When he returned to Bradford, he had fewer and fewer jobs. After returning early from a conference one day, Smith found that most of his customers had turned to other plumbers to do his work. There was only one widow left who couldn't find anyone, and Smith immediately went to her and repaired the damage. He even renovated the damaged roof. When she asked him how much she owed him, Smith replied: "I won't take any money from you. My work here, my last job as a plumber, is to be an offering to the Lord." With that declaration, he paid his bills, closed his business and began his full-time service for God. Despite the stories of poverty he had heard, he believed that God would provide generously for him if he served

Him faithfully. Full of confidence in his partnership with God, he made one condition: "I never want to be ashamed of the heels of my shoes and I never want to wear trousers that are worn through at the knees. I said to the Lord, "If either of those things ever happen, I will reopen my plumbing business." God never let Smith down and he never worked as a plumber again.

"Let them go!"

Soon after, Smith was to have one of the experiences in his life that saddened him the most. While waiting at the railway station for his connecting train to Scotland, he received devastating news: Polly had suffered a heart attack after walking home from the Bowland Street Mission. He rushed home as quickly as he could, only to find that her spirit had already left her body and gone to be with the Lord. But Smith was not satisfied with that! He immediately began to reject death, and Polly's spirit did indeed return, albeit only for a short time. The Lord said to Smith, "I want to take her home to me now." With a heavy heart, Smith let his companion, the woman he had loved for so many years, go so that she could be with the Lord. When Polly Wigglesworth died on 1 January 1913, she had served the Lord until her last breath. Some claim that Smith asked for a double anointing of the Spirit after her death. His ministry was truly more powerful and resounding from that day forward.

The secret is ...

Immediately afterwards, Smith travelled around the country with his daughter and son-in-law to minister. It was very unusual for the British press to cover current religious events. And yet the front page of the Daily Mirror featured four photographs of Wigglesworth in action and a report on his dynamic ministry. As this newspaper was the most widely read paper in England, hundreds sought out his ministry. Smith had a very profound revelation about faith and he drew crowds when he taught on the subject. Wigglesworth did not hope that prayers would be answered. His idea of faith was very concrete and the love of Jesus Christ expressed through him would melt the heart of any unbeliever. Smith's doctrine of faith was simple. Just believe. He was convinced that God favoured no one. One example he often cited to explain this teaching was the passage in the New Testament where John is referred to as the apostle whom Jesus "loved". In his opinion, the fact that John "leaned on Jesus' breast" did not mean that the Lord favoured him over the others. The reason Jesus paid special attention to him was John's relationship with him and that John put all his trust in him. Smith repeatedly emphasised, "There is a kind of faith that moves God to pass over a million people just to anoint you." Many authors have tried to fathom in their books what the secret of Wigglesworth's strength was, but the answer is very simple. His strong faith resulted from the relationship he had with Jesus Christ. From this relationship, Smith drew the wisdom to act correctly in every situation he faced. God has no favourites - he works through people and helps people who believe in him.

"I am never too late"

Smith's methods were often misunderstood and criticised. However, he did not allow himself to be put off by his critics, but was merciful in his dealings with them. Instead of seeking revenge, he replied to them: "It is not what I see or hear, but what I believe that determines my actions." Smith was taught by the Holy Spirit about the different levels of faith. Firstly, he revealed to him that faith could be generated in other people. This realisation came to fruition, for example, in the case of a boy who was seriously ill. The family had summoned Smith, but when he finally arrived, the boy's mother opened the door for him with the words: "It's too late. There's nothing more you can do for him!" Smith replied: "God has never sent me anywhere too late." The boy's condition had deteriorated so much that they didn't dare move him for fear that his heart would fail and he would die. Needless to say, the family had no faith and the boy was too sick to use his own faith. Before he could pray for the boy, Smith had to leave because he had to keep an appointment at a local church. But he assured the family that he would be back. He also asked them to put out suitable clothes for the boy, as the Lord would raise him

up. When Smith returned, he found that the family had not complied with his instruction. The family, however, was embarrassed by his faith and they immediately laid out some clothes for the boy. Smith asked to put socks on the boy. After Smith entered the room where the boy lay, he closed the door behind him. He turned to the lifeless child and told him that something was about to happen that he had never experienced before. "When I lay my hands on you, the glory of the Lord will fill this room until I can no longer stand on my feet. I will be helpless on the floor." The moment Smith touched the boy, the power of God manifested itself so strongly in the room that Smith fell to the floor. Suddenly, the boy began to cry out, "This is for your glory, Lord!" While the boy got out of bed and got dressed, Smith was still on the floor. The boy yanked open the door and shouted, "Dad! God has healed me! I'm well again!" The whole house was filled with such glory that the mother and father also collapsed under the power of God. Even his sister, who had been released from a mental hospital, was suddenly completely normal again, mentally healthy. The whole town was in turmoil and a revival began. On this eventful day, Smith learnt how to transfer faith by laying on his hands. His ministry was never the same from that point on, because he had entered a new level of faith. He was now able to generate faith and transfer it into the lives of others.





Beim Predigen des Wortes.



Smith dient „im Geist".



Spätere Jahre.





Gottes Student.



Vier Generationen.



Ein Fläschchen mit Salböl, das Smith Wigglesworth benutzte.

"Run, woman, run!"

As his faith grew, the Lord showed him another principle of faith: faith must be put into action. At the time, the "average believer" thought that God was sovereign and that they had no control over His actions. Smith Wigglesworth's ministry brought light into this dark area. In his deep relationship with the Lord, Smith discovered in the Bible that the people who received something from God had acted according to God's Word. For this reason, he emulated this model of faith in each of his services. Before

his altar calls, he said: "If you take just one step forward, you will be blessed; if you take one metre back, you will receive even more. If you come all the way to the front of the stage, we will pray for you and God will meet your need according to his ability." This truth about faith was the centrepiece of his healing ministry. A truth that many labelled "relentless". Smith Wigglesworth's actions resulted from his great compassion and rock-solid faith in God. Every Christian must put what they believe into action to make a difference, and with some people Smith had to "give a little help" to get them to act. He called this area of his ministry "one-on-one healing" because in such cases, his faith was the primary basis for their action. During one event in Arizona, for example, a young woman responded to his call for healing. She was suffering greatly from tuberculosis, but as she stepped out into the centre aisle, Smith said to her, "I'm going to pray for you now and then you're going to walk through this building." He prayed, then shouted, "Run, woman, run!" But the woman replied: "But I can't run. I can barely stand." "Don't contradict me!" Smith called out to her. "Do what I told you!" When she still hesitated, Smith jumped down from the stage, grabbed her hand and took off running. She clung to him until she got into her stride and then effortlessly took a lap around the hall. Among those present was another woman whose legs were bent from sciatica. She was also told by Smith: "Run!" She resisted so much that he gave her a push! Then he ran around the building with the woman clinging to him convulsively. Finally, God honoured her action by sending his power upon her and she was completely healed. She attended further meetings on foot, refusing to travel by tram because she was so happy to be able to stand and walk on her own two feet again.

"Dad! I'm fine through and through!"

Sometimes Smith illustrated acting in faith in a different way. He would read out certain passages of scripture and then act on them himself. He often invited the lame and needy to a feast where they were served a lavish meal by the members of the Bowland Street Mission. For their entertainment, he had chosen healing stories that moved these poor people to tears. At the first such feast, Smith set the tone for those that followed. Smith explained, "Tonight we have entertained you. Next Saturday is another event. All those who have come today bound and in wheelchairs ... all those who have spent all their fortunes on doctors and have not seen recovery will entertain us by telling us how they were set free today through the name of Jesus." Then he added, "Who wants to be healed?" Of course, everyone came forward. A woman who had come in a wheelchair was able to walk home, and an eighteen-year-old epileptic was healed immediately so that he was able to work just two weeks later. A boy who was dependent on the help of an iron brace was also instantly healed. When the power of God came upon him, he shouted: "Daddy, daddy, daddy, I'm fine through and through!" Week after week, the sick and needy came to the feast, attracted by the reports of the healing miracles that had taken place in the church services. An overwhelming revival broke out among them, which was triggered simply by people acting on the word of God.

"I set the spirit in motion!"

Smith Wigglesworth took Hebrews 11:6 very seriously. He truly believed that it was impossible to please God without faith. For this reason, he enriched every area of his spiritual life with faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. When the slightest breath of the Spirit came upon Smith, he would retreat to a room to be alone with God. By deepening this relationship, he came to understand how to put faith into action while co-operating with the Holy Spirit. During one meeting, someone noticed how quickly Smith responded to the Spirit. When asked about his secret, Smith replied, "You know, it's like this: If the Holy Spirit doesn't move me, I set it in motion." Those who did not understand the lawfulness of faith thought his answer was arrogant and disrespectful. But in reality, Smith knew how to attract the Spirit of God. His statement was based on faith and was in no way an expression of pride. If the Holy Spirit did not move right at the beginning of a service, Smith would lead the congregation in a natural way. Through his faith, he drew the attention of the listeners to the Word and power of God, thus

increasing their expectation. As a result, the Holy Spirit responded to their faith and manifested itself. Smith took the initiative and in faith fuelled the gifts that were within him. He did not wait for a spiritual power to come upon him and take possession of him. In his opinion, every action, every mode of operation and every manifestation had a single trigger, namely faith. Genuine faith confronts and becomes effective when one takes the initiative. Smith Wigglesworth then taught the body of Christ that every believer could speak in new tongues by taking the initiative. He was convinced that faith, not the sovereign intervention of God, was the only foundation that fuelled the human spirit. J. E. Stiles, a great servant of God and author who belonged to the Assemblies of God, learnt this important principle from Smith Wigglesworth and spread it wherever his ministry took him. During a major event in California, Smith called on all those who had not yet been baptised in the Holy Spirit to stand up. He then asked for those who had been baptised but had not spoken in new tongues in the last six months. "I'm going to say a simple prayer now," Smith began, "and when I'm done, I'm going to say "Go!" and you will all speak in tongues." Smith prayed, then shouted, "Go!" As everyone began to comply with his request, a noise was heard in the hall that sounded like the sound of many waters rushing. Smith then asked them to do exactly the same thing again, except this time, when he signalled the start, everyone was to sing in faith in new languages. He prayed again and shouted: "Come on, sing!" It sounded like a huge, glorious choir. That day, Stiles said, he learnt that the Holy Spirit works through faith. Shortly after receiving this revelation, he began his international ministry.

Another secret

Smith Wigglesworth was a man who possessed great compassion. When he received prayer requests from all over the world, he pleaded with God and wept for the people who had written to him. When he prayed for the sick, tears often ran down his cheeks. He was particularly tender and sensitive with children and the elderly. When the heat became unbearable during the services, he would call the babies and the elderly to the front to pray for them first. Echoing the biblical truth reported in Acts 19:11-12, thousands were healed after Smith prayed for and sent handkerchiefs to those he could not visit in person. A close friend said of the earnestness and compassion that was part of Smith's personality: "When ... it came time for the letters to be opened, we had to stop what we were doing - no matter what we were doing - and take up the burden. When he devoted himself to this task, he did not tolerate the slightest trace of haste or sloppiness ... Everyone in the house had to join the prayer meeting and lay their hands on the handkerchiefs that were then sent to the sick. They were treated as if the authors of the letters were there in person."

Chasing the devil

After Smith realised that it was his great mercy that had moved Jesus to work miracles, he developed a positively aggressive zeal to destroy the works of the devil. His goal was to heal all those who were bound and to teach the body of Christ to deal ruthlessly with the devil. One day, while waiting for the bus, he observed a woman telling her dog to go home. Although she had tried "the gentle way" several times, the dog did not respond. When she saw the bus approaching, she stamped her foot vigorously and shouted: "Go home now!" With its tail between its legs, the dog immediately ran off. "That's how we have to deal with the devil," Smith shouted loud enough for everyone around him to hear. He had little patience with demons, especially when they dared to disturb his church services. One day he was leading a meeting and as he couldn't get "freedom" to preach, he started shouting. Nothing happened. He took off his coat, nothing happened. Now Smith asked the Lord what was wrong, and the Lord showed him a group of people sitting side by side on a bench holding hands. Smith immediately realised that they were spiritualists who wanted to disturb his service. As he began his sermon, he got down from the stage and walked straight towards them. He then grabbed the bench and ordered the devil to leave. The whole troupe tumbled over each other onto the floor, hastily picked themselves up again and left the building in a hurry. When it came to casting out demons, Smith Wigglesworth was

completely secure and confident in his faith. Prayers didn't have to be long; if the prayer was based on faith, it was sure to be answered.

International authority

Smith's international ministry, which peaked in 1920, began in 1914, and although he was persistently attacked, persecution never seemed to be a major theme in his ministry. In his case, unlike some other ministries, his remarkable strength and miracles were reported more than his difficulties and opposition. Perhaps this fact is due to his extraordinary faith. He shook off criticism as one would dust off a coat, and he did not begrudge it even the slightest triumph. The Swedish Medical Association and the Swedish authorities thought they could "paralyse" Wigglesworth's ministry if they banned him from laying hands on people. But that didn't worry Smith in the slightest. He knew that God honoured faith, not method. The next time he came to the end of his service, he asked over 20,000 people to "lay hands on themselves" and use their faith for their healing while he prayed. Whole crowds were healed instantly. Smith referred to such mass healings as "mass processing healings". In the same year, Smith was arrested twice in Switzerland. He was accused of carrying out medical treatments without a licence. On a third occasion, some police officers visited a servant of God who belonged to the Pentecostal movement at home with a warrant for Wigglesworth's arrest. The preacher said, "Mr Wigglesworth is not here at the moment, but before you arrest him, I want to show you what he has already done here in the town through his ministry." He led the police officers to another neighbourhood to the house of a woman they had already arrested several times. When the police officers saw that she was completely free and believed in Jesus Christ, they were very impressed and told the preacher: "We refuse to stop such a work. Someone else will have to arrest this man, we will not do it." And "someone else" did. A policeman later came to Smith in the middle of the night and said, "I can't find anything wrong with you. You can go." Smith replied: "No! I will only leave on one condition: Every police officer in this house must get on their knees and I will pray for all of them."

Pentecost!

In 1921, Smith's ministry flourished. Invitations from works all over the world landed in his mailbox and he was urged to embark on the longest sea voyage of his life. Although he was very popular in Europe and America, nobody in Colombo in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) seemed to be interested in his arrival. However, just a few days later, people were already crowding into the hall to get a seat. Many had to stay outside. When the event was over, Smith mingled with the thousands of people, touching them and connecting his faith in God with their faith. It is reported that people were healed by the dozen when "his shadow" fell on them. In 1922, Smith travelled to New Zealand and Australia. Some believe that Smith's events led to the founding of Pentecostal churches in New Zealand and Australia. Although he was only there for a few months, thousands were saved, healed and filled with the Holy Spirit and subsequently spoke in new languages. At that time, Australia and New Zealand experienced the greatest spiritual revival in their history.

"Can you bless a pig?"

Dr Lester Sumrall from South Bend, Indiana, once told of a funny incident that happened when he was travelling with Smith. When they were in Wales, a dinner had been prepared for them. And as it happened, the main course was roast pork! As Smith had been asked to bless the food, he said in a loud voice: "Lord, if you can bless what you have cursed, then bless this pig!" Smith's humour and boldness impressed Sumrall greatly. Dr Sumrall always laughed heartily when he told me this story.

A controversy that did not go public

Although many churches were established through his work, Smith Wigglesworth preferred not to affiliate with any denomination throughout his ministry. His heart's desire was to reach all people, no matter what denomination they belonged to. He never wanted to be negatively influenced by any denomination. Few know that there was a conflict in Smith Wigglesworth's life that convinced him all the more that an independent ministry was preferable. In 1915 he had become a member of the Pentecostal Missionary Union. The Union's Board of Directors was not a denomination; it neither granted licences nor ordained anyone for the ministry. It was merely an umbrella organisation for ministries that shared the same faith. Smith belonged to the PMU until his resignation was requested in 1920. By that time, Smith had been a widower for seven years and had become friends with a certain Mrs Amphlett. Smith had told her that he felt a "spiritual bond" with her. But Amphlett rejected this idea and, together with another woman, she wrote to the PMU to complain. The letter was addressed to Cecil Polhill, who informed the other board members and the board secretary, Mr Mundell. Although the PMU had very strict views on relationships between men and women, Smith Wigglesworth was convinced that the PMU would side with him despite the allegations. However, shortly after Ms Amphlett's letter was received by the PMU, Mr Polhill wrote to Wigglesworth asking him to resign from his position on the board immediately. He also stated that the Council felt that Smith "should refrain from serving the Lord in public for an extended period of time and instead endeavour to set his position right before God and man by leading a quiet, godly life for an extended period of time and producing works worthy of repentance". Smith complied and resigned, even though he had the impression that the two women had conspired to destroy his ministry. Smith was so disappointed with Polhill for tolerating this situation being blown up that he wrote a personal letter to the secretary of the board, Mr Mundell: "I think Mr Polhill has gone too far this time, as he has made [them] appear that I have committed fornication or adultery, when I have been guilty of neither of these offences. I have behaved foolishly and acted foolishly and God has forgiven me. This matter was resolved spiritually and furthermore in the church and in the presence of Mr Polhill and he should have recognised this matter.

In another letter to Mr Polhill, Smith wrote: "... God will set all things right. The good hand of God is upon me and I will get over everything. This week God has rejected the oppressor through his servant. I will go forward, dear brother, and I advise you to see that the gospel is not stopped by you; you should treat me as you would like to be treated. You need not take the trouble to send me any official statements to sign. I have signed this letter to you, and that is enough." From that point on, Smith Wigglesworth was constantly busy answering letters of invitation to serve from all over the world. To protect himself from false accusations of this kind in future, Smith now always travelled with his daughter Alice. The conflict associated with his resignation did not slow Smith down at all. On the contrary, it seemed to spur him on even more. This is often the case when people break out of the control of denominationalism. I know that the PMU was not a denomination. But such management committees can sometimes develop an element of control, even though they originally began in the right spirit. This control may be subliminal, yet it affects the whole course of the ministry. It was better for Smith to strike out on his own. He didn't need the call or the support of the PMU. The power of God was with him.

You better be ready!

Wigglesworth loved the Word of God and he studied it diligently. When he didn't have his Bible with him, he felt as if he wasn't fully clothed. While others read novels or newspapers, he read the Bible. He never got up from a friend's table until he had, as he put it, "taken a bite out of the book".

Hardship was brought to his knees

Although Wigglesworth had seen many miracles and instant healings with his own eyes, he had not received many such miracles himself. In 1930, as Smith passed seventy, agonising pain set in. He prayed, but he did not become pain-free. So Smith went to see a doctor who, after x-raying him, diagnosed Smith with advanced kidney stones. Only an operation could help, and according to the doctor, Smith would die if he did nothing about this painful condition. However, Smith explained: "Doctor, the God who created this body can also heal it. As long as I live, I will not allow him to go under the knife." The doctor received this reaction with concern and dismay, but Smith left him with the assurance that he would hear about his healing. The pain increased with each passing day and kidney irritation set in. Smith, who got out of bed every night, writhed in agony on the floor as his body tried to expel the stones. One sharp-edged stone after another came out. Smith had assumed the ordeal would be short-lived, but in total it lasted six long and painful years. During that time, however, Smith never missed a single service on his schedule; some days he even served twice. At some meetings, he prayed for no less than 800 people, even though he himself was in excruciating pain. Only when the pain became unbearable did he leave the pulpit for a short time to excrete another kidney stone in the toilet. He then returned to the stage and continued with the service. He often had to get out of bed himself to visit others who were ill and pray for them. Very few people realised that he was going through the toughest ordeal of his life. Sometimes he lost so much blood that he turned pale and had to be wrapped in blankets to keep him warm. After six agonising years, he had passed over a hundred kidney stones, which he had collected in a glass bottle. His son-in-law, James Salter, spoke these appreciative words about Smith: "As we lived with him and shared the bedroom with him, which we did frequently in those years, we marvelled at his unquenchable zeal in preaching his fiery messages and his compassionate ministry to the sick. He not only endured these torments, he submitted them to God's will and triumphed in them and ultimately over them."

"Their eyes are on me!"

After battling kidney stones for two years, Smith did not give up. Instead, in 1932, he asked God to allow him to serve for another fifteen years. God granted Smith this request and during these years he travelled most of Europe, South Africa and America. He rejoiced most when he saw the Word accompanied by signs and wonders through the faith of the people. His greatest desire was that people would see Jesus and not Smith Wigglesworth. In the last months of his life, he was saddened by a circumstance which he describes as follows: "Today in my mail there was an invitation to Australia, one to India and Ceylon and one to America. People have their eyes on me." He began to weep with grief: "Poor Wigglesworth. How wrong of you to think that people are looking at you. God shares his honour with no one. He will take you off the stage!"

And he was no more ...

because God had taken him away Seven days later, Smith Wigglesworth travelled to the funeral of a preacher. On the way, he remarked to his friend how "marvellous" he felt. He pointed out the different parts of the country that he and Polly had visited together and where they had preached, and then told of the marvellous miracles that had taken place during their stay there. When he reached the church, his son-in-law James opened the door and helped him into the vestry, where a warm fire was burning. As he entered, he came across the father of a little girl for whom he had prayed a few days earlier. The doctors had already given up on the girl, but Smith had had great faith for her healing. When he caught sight of the man, Smith asked, "So, how is she?" He expected the answer that the girl was completely healthy, but the father hesitated. "She's a little better. It's not quite as bad and the pain hasn't been quite as bad in the last few days." Disappointed, Smith let out a deep, sympathetic sigh. Then his head sank to his chest and without another word and without any pain, Smith Wigglesworth went home to the Lord. He left this earth on 12 March 1947.

Faith + mercy = miracles

A few years ago, as I was ministering to people who had lined up for prayer, a man came up to me with tears streaming down his face. He told me about the power he had experienced in the Voice of Healing revival meetings. The power of God that had worked in those meetings had set him free. I will never forget what he said as long as I live: "Is there no one who ministers in the same power that they did? Is there no one who can set me free? Is there no one like that today?" Has the power in which Smith Wigglesworth lived been withdrawn from the earth? Did he take it with him when he left? Of course not! The same power that Wigglesworth ministered in is available to us today, we don't need more power. We just need to use our faith and mercy to bring that power to bear. Wigglesworth acted in the boldest faith I have ever heard of besides the events in Acts, but that faith was ignited by mercy. Smith took God at His word and had mercy on people; miracles come from this combination. Now our generation faces the same challenge. God has called men and women to conquer cities and countries in the power of heaven. Will you answer the call of God? Do you dare to simply believe? Do you feel such a strong compassion in your heart for people that you will take God at His word and take action? May it one day be said of our generation: "... who through faith conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness gained strength, became strong in battle, drove back the armies of strangers" (Hebrews 11:33-34). Ignite the gift of God in you and win your family, your home and your country for him in God's strength! Allow the will of heaven to be carried out on earth - through you!